

Chapter 17

Research Position Evaluation System (RPES)

The Research Position Evaluation System (RPES) is the ARS system used for evaluation and position classification of permanent research scientist (Category 1) positions. The RPES is based on the "person-in-the-job" concept, providing open-ended promotion potential based on a research scientist's personal contributions to science and technology, which can change the complexity and responsibility of their position.

The standardized case writeup format discussed in Manual 431.3-ARS is an important feature in assuring consistent and equitable evaluation throughout ARS.

Abbreviations: See Chapter 22 for commonly used acronyms and abbreviations.

References: P & P 431.3-ARS—Research Position Evaluation System
Manual 431.3-ARS—RPES Case Writeup Preparation and Guidance for
Panelists
RPES Video Series
RPES Brochures
RPES Home Page: <http://www.ars.usda.gov/afm/rpes>
Form AD 332 - Position Description Cover Sheet
Form ARS 514 - Research Position Evaluation Case Writeup Cover Sheet
Form ARS 570 - Indepth Reviewer Contact Sheet

Cross References: Chapter 10 - Human Resources

Points of Contact: **For info on format, due dates, etc...**
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For info on content...

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Panelists must have information in sufficient detail to make fair and equitable classification decisions. Information on individual positions and incumbents will be submitted according to the attached checklist* which is compatible with the format of the Research Grade-Evaluation Guide (RGEG).

The standardized format is an important feature in assuring consistent and equitable evaluation throughout ARS. Case material will be reviewed for adherence to format. Inaccurate, incomplete or improperly prepared writeups will be returned for revision.

Attachments are as follows:

- Attach 1 -** Subjects Contained in P&P 431.3-ARS
Research Position Evaluation System
- Attach 2 -** Material Contained in Manual 431.3
·RPES Case Writeup Preparation and Guidance for Panelists
- Attach 3 -** Checklist used for Case Writeups and Helpful Hints
- Attach 4 -** Form ARS-514, RPEC Writeup Cover Sheet
- Attach 5 -** Form AD-332, Position Description Cover Sheet
- Attach 6 -** Form ARS-570, Indepth Reviewer Contact Sheet
- Attach 7 -** "Notice of Case Writeup" letter from Area Office
"Mandatory Position Review Notice" from Headquarters
(These contain pertinent submission information. Also note
the reference to the RPES Home Page: www.ars.usda.gov/afm/rpes
which is an invaluable source of information).

SUBJECTS CONTAINED IN POLICY AND PROCEDURE 431.3-ARS

Research Position Evaluation System

This policy and procedure establishes policy for the ARS Research Position Evaluation System (RPES). It contains abbreviations and cross references in the glossary that you will need to know followed by exhibits on Peer Groups, Filling Vacant Research Positions, and Panel Decision Options.

In addition to the usual explanations for authority, forms, definitions, coverage, and purpose the other important things that are covered are:

- Panel Administration
- Panel Review Requirements
- Panel Composition
- Confidentiality Requirement
- Panel Decision Options
- Preparation and Submission of Evaluation Materials
- Supergrade Evaluation Panels
- Panel Review Records

MATERIAL CONTAINED IN MANUAL 431.3-ARS

RPES Case Writeup Preparation and Guidance for Panelists

This manual provides detailed guidance for (1) preparing case writeups for panel review, and (2) determining the grade level of positions covered by the ARS Research Position Evaluation System (RPES).

In Part I (Case Writeup Preparation), along with the introduction and references, and general guidance, it contains detailed information on the preparation of case writeups an example of the format outline and a submission checklist.

In Part II (Evaluation Guidance), additional information is presented on:

- Panel Operating Procedures
- Ad Hoc Panels
- Conducting an Indepth Review
- OPM Research Grade-Evaluation Guide
- ARS Accomplishment Rating Guide
- Additional Evaluation Guidance
- Glossary

Checklist for RPES Case Writeups
Using Manual 431.3-ARS

Factor 1 - Research Assignment

(Official Job Description - USE GENDER NEUTRAL TERMS)

- ☐ **A. Assigned Responsibility**
(Organization, location, general area of work; leadership responsibilities – Lead Scientist, RL, Director)
- ☐ **B. Research Objectives and Methodology**
(Specific research objectives; methodology; distinguish between personal and team research objectives)
- ☐ **C. Expected Results**
(Expected results and impact on science or technology)
- ☐ **D. Knowledge Required**
(For CURRENT assignment)
- ☐ **E. Supervisory Responsibilities**
(Title and grade of ARS employees; nature of supervision given; EEO statement)

Factor II - Supervision Received

(USE GENDER NEUTRAL TERMS)

- ☐ **A. Assigned Authority**
- ☐ **B. Technical Guidance Received**
- ☐ **C. Review of Results**
- ☐ **D. General Supervision**

Factor III - Guidelines and Originality

- ☐ **A. Available Literature**
- ☐ **B. Originality Required**

- ___ C. **Demonstrated Originality** -- BEGIN ON NEW PAGE --
(Info specific to the scientist & subject to the Privacy Act; brief paragraph relating to current research)

Factor IV - Qualifications and Contributions

- ___ A. **Demonstrated Accomplishments**
___ No more than 3 for GS-11 & below; 5 for GS-12; 8 for GS/GM-13 and above
___ Leadership accomplishment encouraged if applicable
___ What was done, not how it was done
___ If team effort, incumbent's exact contribution to total accomplishment
___ Why significant (impact on science; adoption; economic importance)
___ Chronological order
___ Should not exceed 1/3 page
___ Accomplishments since last promotion identified by asterisk
___ At least 1, no more than 3 exhibits per accomplishment
___ Check format/identify exhibits
___ Additional accomplishments may be listed in the same format--exhibits are NOT permitted
___ Written in new format (Accomplishment/Role/Impact)

___ B. **Stature, Recognition, and Impact**

- ___ 1. Honors and Awards
___ 2. Special Invitations (If applicable, indicate most significant)
___ 3. Membership in Professional Societies
___ 4. Offices and Committee Assignments Held in Professional and Honorary Societies

___ C. **Advisory and Consultant Activities**

- ___ 1. Participation in National Scientific Meetings, Technical Conferences, Workshops, etc. (No duplication with Invited Papers)
___ 2. Professional Advisory and Consulting Activities (if applicable)
___ 3. Special Assignments

___ **D. Other**

- ___ 1. Educational Background
- ___ 2. Additional Training
- ___ 3. Research Experience
- ___ 4. Status (date of last promotion; date entered for duty, new hire)
- ___ 5. Other Significant Information (materials in preparation or submitted but not yet accepted are to be listed here, NOT in the publications list)

___ **E. Publications --BEGIN ON NEW PAGE--**

- ___ Listed in chronological order
- ___ Continue the page numbering from the write-up
- ___ Scientific journal articles - list only those already published or accepted
- ___ Provide date accepted if not yet published
- ___ Identify other than scientific journal articles
- ___ Delineate by a dashed line across the page those materials published or accepted for publication since last promotion.
- ___ Abstracts are listed on a separate page in an unlettered section at the end of the publication list. They are listed in chronological order and numbered sequentially (preceded by an "A"), WITHOUT a line delineating those published or accepted since last promotion.
- ___ Do not cross-reference abstracts to the publications list.

___ ARS-514 Transmittal Form (with immediate supervisor's signature)

___ AD-332 Position Description Cover Sheet (with immediate supervisor's signature)

___ ARS-570 In-depth Reviewer Contact Sheet (include immediate supervisor)

General Guidance

1. In addition to studying Part 1, case writers should review the Research Grade Evaluation Guide to get an understanding of the evaluation objective of each factor.
2. In writing Factors I, II, and III, use gender-neutral terms and style instead of saying "he," "she," "his," or "her." Begin sentences with action verbs (the subject is understood). Write brief narrative paragraphs following the outline shown above.
3. Undue detail, excess verbosity, and needless repetition may weaken rather than strengthen a case writeup.

HELPFUL HINTS (When submitting case writeups).

Signatures should be on the 332 and 514 when the draft is submitted.

It must be the supervisor's signature, not an acting, unless there is a permanent acting supervisor.

Do not staple anything, clip it instead.

The individual exhibits are stapled, but nothing else should be stapled. When the case is approved for submission to Headquarters, the necessary items will be stapled in the Area Office.

At the time the draft is submitted, the exhibits should be properly labeled (for example, Exhibit 1, #4). This information has to be on the exhibit in order for the first reviewer to cross check the references.

The items that start on a new page are:

(The bold items are actually what start on new pages)

Factor III - Guidelines and Originality, **C. Demonstrated Originality**

Factor IV - Qualifications and Contributions, **E. Publications**

Abstracts - This title is not preceded by a letter. In listing the individual abstracts, the numbers of the abstracts are preceded by the letter A, for example, A1, A2, A3, etc.

Under Factor IV, A. Demonstrated Accomplishments, if there are to be additional accomplishments listed, the numbering is sequential. If you have 8 regular accomplishments, start listing the additional ones with 9, 10, etc.

Under Factor IV, D. Other, No.4. Status. Use the title "Status" (not Date of Last Promotion).

Continue page numbering on the Publication and Abstract lists.

Be sure you are using the most current issue of P&P/Manual 431.3-ARS.

Research Position Evaluation Case Writeup (Cover Sheet)	Name of Employee	Date
	Title	Series and Grade
	Organization	Peer Group (Alpha Code)
Supervisor	Title	

Privacy Act Notification

General

This information is provided pursuant to the Privacy Act for individuals supplying information for inclusion in a system of records. Section 5107, Title 5, United States Code, authorizes agencies to place positions in the appropriate grade and series in conformance with standards published by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). The Research Grade-Evaluation Guide (RGEG) published by OPM in accordance with Section 5105, Title 5, provides guidance/criteria for evaluation of research positions. Providing information for Factor IV is voluntary, but essential to the classification process.

Purposes and Uses

Factor IV collects information needed to provide a Research Position Evaluation Panel with essential incumbent facts to evaluate the position against RGEG criteria. This information may be disclosed to appropriate officials/employees of the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), USDA Office of Human Resources Management, and OPM, involved in the research position classification process. These data may also be used to aid decisions on placement of research scientists within ARS.

Effects of Nondisclosure

Because Factor IV of the case writeup contains information which the panel uses to classify your position, providing complete and specific information for each element of the factor is in your best interest. Omission of an item may result in a lower score than otherwise appropriate.

Employee's Signature_____
Date

CLEARANCE

I have reviewed this case writeup and find it to be accurate, complete and in the prescribe format. A properly signed and dated AD-332 is included.

Supervisor's Signature_____
Date_____
Area Director's Signature_____
Date

REASON FOR THIS POSITION										POSITION DESCRIPTION COVER SHEET		
1. NEW	2. IDENTICAL ADDITION TO THE ESTABLISHED PD NUMBER	3. REPLACES PD NUMBER										
RECOMMENDED												
4. TITLE								5. PAY PLAN	6. SERIES	7. GRADE		
8. WORKING TITLE (Optional)								9. INCUMBENT (Optional)				
OFFICIAL												
10. TITLE												
11. PP	12. SERIES	13. FUNC	14. GRADE	15. DATE MONTH DAY YEAR			16. I/A	17. CLASSIFIER				
							Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>					
18. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE (Agency/Bureau)												
1st				5th								
2nd				6th								
3rd				7th								
4th				8th								
SUPERVISOR'S CERTIFICATION												
I certify that this is an accurate statement of the major duties and responsibilities of the position and its organizational relationships and that the position is necessary to carry out Government functions for which I am responsible. This certification is made with the knowledge that this information is to be used for statutory purposes relating to appointment and payment of public funds and that false or misleading statements may constitute violations of such statute or their implementing regulations.												
19. SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE					20. DATE		22. SECOND LEVEL SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE			23. DATE		
21. SUPERVISOR'S NAME AND TITLE					24. SECOND LEVEL SUPERVISOR'S NAME AND TITLE							
FACTOR EVALUATION SYSTEM												
FACTOR	25. FLD/BMK	26. POINTS	FACTOR	25. FLD/BMK	26. POINTS							
1. Knowledge Required			6. Personal Contacts									
2. Supervisory Controls			7. Purpose of Contacts									
3. Guidelines			8. Physical Demands									
4. Complexity			9. Work Environment									
5. Scope and Effect			27. TOTAL POINTS ►		27.							
28. GRADE ►					28.							
CLASSIFICATION CERTIFICATION												
I certify that this position has been classified as required by Title 5, US Code, in conformance with standards published by the OPM or, if no published standard applies directly, consistently with the most applicable published standards.												
29. SIGNATURE				30. DATE								
31. NAME AND TITLE												
32. REMARKS				33. OPM CERTIFICATION NUMBER								

MASTER RECORD/INDIVIDUAL POSITION DATA

THIS SIDE TO BE COMPLETED BY THE CLASSIFIER

A. KEY DATA

1. FUNCTION (1) ◀ A/C/D/I/R	2. DEPT. CD./AGCY-BUR-CD. (4)	3. SON (4)	4. MR. NO. (6)	5. GRADE (2)	6. IP NO. (8)
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B. MASTER RECORD

1. PAY PLAN (2)	2. OCC. SER. (4)	3. OCC. FUNC. CD. (2)	4. OFF. TITLE CD. (5)	5. OFF. TITLE (38)				
6. HQ. FLD. CD. (1) 1 = HQ ◀ 2 = FLD		7. SUP. CD. (1) 1 = Sup. SGEG 3 = Mgr. SGEG ◀ 4 = Sup. CSRA 5 = Mgmt. CSRA 6 = Leader LGEG 8 = All Others		8. CLASS. STD. CD. (1) X = New Std. Applied Blank = NA		9. INTERDIS. CD. (1) N = No ◀ Y = Interdis	10. DT. CLASS (6) MO DAY YEAR	
11. EARLY RET. CD. (1) 1 = Primary ◀ 2 = Secondary 3 = Foreign Svc. Blank = NA		12. INACT/ACT (1) I = Inactive ◀ A = Active		13. DT. ABOL. (6) MO DAY YEAR		14. DT. INACT/REACT (6) MO DAY YEAR		15. AGCY. USE (10)
16. INTERDIS. SER. (40) (4)		(4)		(4)		(4)		(4)
17. INTERDIS. TITLE CD. (50) (5)		(5)		(5)		(5)		(5)

C. INDIVIDUAL POSITION

1. FLSA CD. (1) E = Exempt ◀ N = Nonexempt		2. FIN. DIS. REQ. (1) 0 = None 1 = CD 219 ◀ 2 = CD 220 3 = SF 278 4 = AD 392 5 = SF 849		3. POS. SCHED. (1) A = Sched A B = Sched B ◀ C = Sched C 0 = Excepted but not A, B, C		4. POS. SENS. (1) 0 = Nonsensitive 1 = Noncritical ◀ 2 = Critical Sensitive		5. COMP. LEV. (4)			
6. WK. TITLE CD. (4)		7. WK. TITLE (38)									
8. ORG. STR. CD. (18) 1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th 6th 7th 8th		9. VAC. REV. CD. (1) 0 = Position Action No Vacancy ◀ A = No Change B = Lower Grade C = Higher Grade D = Different title and/or series E = New Position/New FTE									
10. TARGET GD. (2)	11. LANG. REQ. (2)	12. PROJ. DTY. IND. (1) Blank = N/A ◀ Y = Yes	13. DUTY STATION (9) State (2) City (4) County (3)		14. BUS. CD. (4)	15. DT. LST. AUDIT (6) MO DAY YEAR		16. PAS. IND. (1) Blank = N/A ◀ 1 = PAS	17. DATE EST. (6) MO DAY YEAR		
18. GD. BASIS. IND. (1) 1 = Rev. when vacant ◀ 2 = Impact of Person 3 = Sup./SGEG 4 = Sup./Program 5 = RGE 6 = Policy Analysis 7 = Equipment Devel. Guide 8 = Agency Use 9 = Agency Use ALPHAS = Agency Use					19. DT. REQ. REC. (6) MO DAY YEAR		20. NTE. DT. (6) MO DAY YEAR		21. POS. ST. BUD (1) Y = Perm N = Other		
22. MAINT. REV./CLASS. ACT. CD. (2) (1st Digit = Activity and 2nd Digit = Results)											
Normal Act 1 = Desk Audit 2 = Sup. Audit 3 = Paper Rev. ◀ 4 = PME/Activity Rev.			Maintenance Review Act 5 = Desk Audit 6 = Sup. Audit 7 = Paper Rev. 8 = Panel Rev.			Results 1 = No Action Req. 2 = Minor PD Change 3 = New PD Req. 4 = Title Change 5 = Series Change 6 = Pos. Upgrade 7 = Pos. Downgrade 8 = New Pos. 9 = Other					
23. DT. EMP. ASGN. (6) MO DAY YEAR		24. DT. ABOL. (6) MO DAY YEAR		25. INACT/ACT (1) 1 = Inact. ◀ 2 = Act.		26. DT. INACT/REACT (6) MO DAY YEAR		27. ACCTG. STAT. (4)		28. INT. ASGN. SER. (4)	29. AGCY. USE (8)
30. CLASSIFIER'S SIGNATURE					31. DATE						
32. REMARKS											

INDEPTH REVIEWER CONTACT SHEET

Name of Scientist _____

[illegible]



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Agricultural
Research
Service

Northern Plains Area
Office of Director

SAMPLE LETTER

1201 Oakridge Drive
Suite 150
Ft. Collins, Colorado
80525-5562

TEL: 970-229-5595
FAX: 970-229-5565
roose@ars.usda.gov

Date:

SUBJECT: Notice of Case Writeup
TO: Name, Location
THROUGH: Supervisor, Title, Location
FROM: Eric E. Roos, Acting Assistant Area Director

Background The following is the current Area-wide procedure to be followed in submitting your case writeup for panel review. Please refer to Manual 431.3 and the second tape of the RPES video series.

Initial draft You should submit one draft copy of your case write-up, with exhibits, AD-332 (1/92), ARS 514 (1/21/92), and ARS-570 (1/21/92), to the Area Director's office by 5-7-98.

After your RPES case writeup has been reviewed by the Area Office and returned to you with comments on content and format, you need to revise your case writeup accordingly.

Final version Forward the following to the Area Office by 5-29-98. The Area Office will review and forward to the RPES section.

1 original and 1 copy of Master Package:

- Certified AD-332, signed & dated by supervisor
- Certified original ARS-514, signed/dated by you, your supervisor, and AD
- Original ARS-570
- Original Factor I-IV writeup (without exhibits)

7 additional copies of Distribution Package:

- ARS-514
- ARS-570
- Factor I-IV writeup and exhibits

Publication Listing Per the Administrator's direction, mail a separate copy of the publication list directly to the Indexing Branch, National Agricultural Library, Beltsville, MD 20705, at the time your case writeup is submitted.

Questions If you have any questions, please contact Louise Dalton or myself. Also, please feel free to contact Merle Cole or Pat Humphrey (HQ RPES) at 301-504-1563.

Conducting the national research programs in
Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota, Montana, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service, Northern Plains Area, is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer and all agency services are available without discrimination.



SAMPLE LETTER

OCT 27 1998

SUBJECT: Mandatory Position Review Notice

TO:

THROUGH:

for Wilbert Blackburn, Director, NPA

FROM: Merle T. Cole, Head, RPE Staff

Eric S. Rao
Pat Humphrey for

The position incumbered by _____ is due for mandatory review by the Research Position Evaluation Committee as provided by Directive 431.3, Section K 2 a.

Our records indicate that the scientist is affiliated with the Food Science and Human Nutrition Peer Group. Please notify us immediately if this is incorrect or if the scientist wishes to change affiliation.

Please instruct the scientist to prepare a case writeup in accordance with the instructions in Manual 431.3 (2/20/96). As supervisor, you should carefully review the writeup and discuss it with the scientist to assure accuracy and completeness.

The completed, final version of the case writeup must be received in the Area Office no later than March 5, 1999. (Your Area Office may have established procedures for submission of draft writeup for review by the Area Director prior to finalization. If so, the Area will advise you of those procedures.)

When preparing the case writeup, we urge the scientist to carefully study the contents of Chapter 1 of Manual 431.3. To facilitate using the chapter, a "Format of Case Writeup" outline appears on pages 3-4.

Chapter 1 provides detailed guidance on case format, thus indicating what information must be addressed in each segment of the writeup. This can serve as a quick check in determining whether all relevant information has been included, in the proper format, to assist the panel in reaching an accurate classification decision.

Particular attention is invited to pages 9-23 of Chapter 1, which provide extensive guidance and samples for preparing and documenting accomplishments under Factor IV. Specific coverage includes research, team research, special assignments/projects, technology transfer, systems research and integration, and

leadership accomplishments. The guidance for selecting documentation (exhibits) appropriate for each type of accomplishment may also prove useful.

You may find these additional resources of value:

RPES Home Page: www.ars.usda.gov/afm/rpes
 Brochure Series
 Videotape Series

If the scientist does not have a copy of current Directive/Manual 431.3 (2/20/96), please contact this office on 301-504-1562.

The final case materials must contain the following:

Master Package. The certified AD-332, certified original ARS-514, original ARS-570, and original Factor I-IV writeup--assembled in that order. (Exhibits are not included in the master package.)

Distribution Packages. Submit seven (7) copies of the ARS-514, ARS-570, Factor I-IV writeup, and exhibits--assembled in that order. (AD-332's are not included in the distribution packages.)

Note: Exhibits are destroyed after each panel meeting.

Submit these materials through supervisory channels to your Area Office, allowing sufficient lead time for typing, supervisory review, and mailing so that the package is received in the Area Office by the cutoff date cited above. (Your Area Office may require submission of additional copies of the case package.)

Scientists may update any portion of their case writeup up to the day the panel actually meets (approximately 2 months after the cutoff date). Such updates are to be submitted directly to this office with a copy to the Area Director.

If the incumbent has received a performance rating of less than "Fully Successful" on a Critical Element, or will receive such a rating before the case is reviewed, or if other performance-related action is being considered, please notify the Area Director and this office immediately.

If you have any questions, please contact Pat Humphrey on 301-504-1565 or by e-mail <phumphrey@ars.usda.gov>.